

# EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE FOR REFORM SERIES

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## THE WISE-ABILITY MODEL

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## HEADLINES

- ADEs can draw on a range of organisational features that have been shown to create a supportive work environment and develop pathways to open and hybrid employment.
- Many of these features are already embedded in the organisational design of advanced ADEs.
- An explicit 'pathway to open employment' can be built.
- Opportunities for hybrid employment, part time ADE and part time open employment, appear to meet the needs of some supported employees.
- NDIS funding remains a barrier to employment transitions to open or hybrid employment.
- Employer knowledge of how to recruit and support employees with significant disability remains a barrier.
- Ongoing supports in the workplace are needed.

## THE WISE-ABILITY MODEL

The WISE-Ability model captures social enterprise organisational design elements which support the wellbeing and employment pathways of people with a disability. The model combines elements that support individuals with a disability (for example, wraparound support, learning opportunities, safe spaces, and elements that support WISE organisations), with organisational elements that WISE require (for example, strong structure, good partnerships, stable funding). The WISE-Ability model captures eight organisational design elements. Figure 1 shows the WISE-Ability model.

Figure 1: The WISE-Ability model overview



## PURPOSE

The purpose of the WISE-Ability model is to show how Australian Disability Enterprises and Social Enterprises (ADEs) can design their organisation to create a supportive work environment and develop pathways out of this supportive environment into appropriate forms of employment for people with a disability.

The model offers an organisational 'blueprint' to ADEs and disability-focused social enterprises, to guide the development and utilisation of organisational features to underpin employment outcomes.

## METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT

The project team worked collaboratively with project partner genU and a variety of stakeholders in the Barwon region to develop and implement the Work Integration Social Enterprise 'WISE' model to improve Supported Employees' work readiness and their transitions to hybrid employment (working in both a supported employment setting and in open employment) or open employment. Project partner genU provided an example of both an ADE setting as well as other employment support activities beyond the ADE. Two branches of genU were involved: Business Enterprises (ADE) and Employment Pathways (using NDIS funding related to capacity building supports to assist with employment). Business enterprises provide employment and support to more than 200 people with a disability across the Geelong region. Supports for Business enterprise employees include: training, life skills coaching, welfare and behaviour support, mental health and emotional support, as well guidance for NDIS funding, service access and referrals. Employment Pathways work with people with a disability building and tailoring employment in the open labour market. Individuals work with

Pathways Coordinators to develop employment plans that align with their personal interests, skills and goals (Campbell et al., 2022, p. 5).

The following research questions guided the project:

- What are the barriers to open employment from ADE/business enterprise settings?
- What facilitates movement into open employment?
- How can the WISE model be adapted to support open employment pathways in WISE/ADE contexts?

The project utilised a WISE model developed in an earlier project (Barraket et al., 2019). This model had identified 7 organisational elements that supported the wellbeing and employment capacity building of targeted employees in social enterprises.

This model was used as a base to compare information from the genU setting. The research team conducted interviews, Action Learning and Steering Committee meetings to gather data with genU and other stakeholders. This included a total of 27 interviews, 4 Action Learning workshops, and 5 Steering Committee meetings held with different groups of stakeholders (including staff, supported employees, open employers and others) between November 2021 and March 2022. Via these methods, each element of the WISE model was examined to determine how it supports the needs of people with a disability in ADE settings. Participants discussed how model elements, like having customised employment pathways, would assist people with a disability to learn hard and soft skills and maintain a job in open employment. Participants identified a range of employment barriers, supports and tools.

The WISE-Ability model (related to supporting employees with disability) was adapted by first identifying the level of organisational alignment to WISE model elements, based on analysis of coded data. New WISE model categories and sub-categories were identified from coding interview data and then cross-checked with the Action Learning Group data and through discussions in Steering Committee meetings.

All categories of the original WISE model were found to be relevant to the disability sector. The adapted model identifies one new category 'Pathways to Hybrid and Open Employment'. There are also an additional 41 categories of information that were not included in the original WISE model, and that directly address the needs of people with disability.

## THE KEY FEATURES OF THE WISE-ABILITY MODEL: A BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSITIONS FROM ADE'S TO OPEN EMPLOYMENT

The WISE-Ability model captures eight organisational design elements. Each is briefly described below and further described in Campbell et al. (2021). There are opportunities for ADEs to more explicitly utilise these design elements to better maximise the employment and wellbeing outcomes of their employees.

### 1. STRUCTURE

The structure of an organisation can support or impede supportive and inclusive work environments for people with disability. Many ADEs have multi-site or multi-enterprise structures, which open up a range of opportunities for employees with disability, acting to counter otherwise limited opportunities people with disability may have had to explore a variety of employment settings and industry types. Diversity and choice enables people to explore interests, strengths and preferences,

including the type of work environments they like and work best in. In addition to the multi-site/enterprise structure of many ADEs, is the way the workforce is structured. This includes the provision of a team of employment support staff, attending to the biopsychosocial needs of employees, and providing training, support and mentoring on-site in the workplace. The structure of training and learning opportunities is particularly important, being based on hands-on learning, appropriately modified to be accessible, and enabling real work experience in industry conditions.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Offering different work types, tasks and work environments/settings
- Allowing time for employees to prepare to change environments
- Identifying a staff person as buddy or mentor
- Linking a support worker with each person to build in-depth understanding
- Identifying accessible equipment requirements
- Using hands-on learning and documenting interests and skills, linked to work goals
- Supporting a healthy work-life balance.

## **2. SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT**

The use of physical space can improve or undermine participation. A range of workspaces, offering both busy and calm environments, with work at different paces, supports appropriate job matches and regulates stress and negative behaviours. Some people thrive in outdoor settings and others in indoor work roles. Workplaces can actively utilise space to manage stress and de-escalate tensions or challenging behaviours through the use of calm spaces, or places that enable walking and physical movement. ADEs have particular strengths in offering accessible layouts with appropriately modified fittings and equipment.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Providing calm spaces and active spaces by sectioning off tasks and work areas
- Providing quiet and safe times of day for employees to talk freely with peers and trusted staff
- Creating access to outdoor environments
- Creating accessible environments
- Providing options for time-out when people are not feeling mentally or physically well.

## **3. CULTURE**

Organisational culture is actively created and curated by the people within the workplace and is key in supporting wellbeing. Features of positive culture include: a non-institutional feel, an understanding and inclusive environment where employees' abilities are valued, a sense of belonging and a culture of support in the workplace (sometime via formal 'buddy' systems), and a focus on high quality products and services delivered by the enterprise of which employees can be proud.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Establishing a culture of understanding and support by having a buddy or go-to person
- Creating opportunity for employee voices and feedback
- Establishing a common goal of high quality services and products to enable pride in work.

#### **4. RELATIONSHIPS**

While 'Culture' focuses on relationships among workers within the organisation, there are also important relationships that the organisation has and can foster externally. These external relationships with commercial, community and other partners provide important avenues to lever ongoing commercial opportunities (that create jobs in the ADE) and also pathways to employment and training for employees beyond the ADE, along with providing other forms of support.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Identifying other organisations linked to the ADE and building shared employment goals
- Supporting partners and stakeholders to build inclusive work environment (opening up opportunities for transition of supported employees, including through work trials etc.)
- Building strong knowledge of partners' interests and capabilities to help leverage opportunities for new work and training projects together.

#### **5. FINANCE AND FUNDING**

Financial sustainability is often a challenge for ADEs and WISEs. The business model will include grants, government funding, NDIS and commercial income (often across diverse commercial enterprises), among other sources. A key WISE challenge to be built into the organisational model is balancing the support needs of employees, building and maintaining commercial operations, while transitioning supported employees both into and out of the ADE.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Drawing on a range of NDIS funding to support employees
- Drawing on social procurement policy and incentives for commercial businesses to work with ADEs
- Considering diverse business offerings.

#### **6. INDUSTRY**

The choice of industry/ies in which the ADE operates not only affects costs and income but also links to opportunities for employment pathways for supported employees. Ideally, the industries within which the ADE enterprises are nested are inclusive and supportive of transitioning supported employees into their workplaces, and the ADE has developed appropriate and relevant employable skill sets in these employees.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Considering operating across multiple industries
- Understanding what skills are in demand in the labour market and linking to skills development of employees
- Prioritising inclusive industries that offer supportive workplaces that will make good employment pathways.

#### **7. POLICY, PROCEDURE AND PROCESS**

Policies and procedures support the social mission of the organisation. Clear procedures are particularly important when WISE support staff bring industry skills but may need guidance on how to best support diverse people with disability. Ways of working have often been modified to best match employee needs, and procedures for key tasks can be communicated on the 'shopfloor' via

things like visual and tactile tools. Communication across the workforce enables all teams to stay in touch, and supported employees feel safe to air feedback and to be part of organisational decisions and feedback. One example is the development of a guide on workplace behaviour developed by supported employees in an ADE. WISE-Ability organisations also recognise the importance of having processes to connect to diverse stakeholders including family and friends of employees, who are instrumental in informing and supporting employment pathways. Daily structures, routines and support can be important processes to embed for many supported employees.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Providing guidance for employment support staff on how best to provide support.
- Keeping family networks informed
- Having policy and procedures to support in-take and exit of employees to keep the workforce balanced
- Using visual and tactile tools to support communication of procedures and work tasks (and sharing these accessible procedural supports with open employers in the employment pathway).

## **8. PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT**

The transition to open employment is often not linear and may involve hybrid employment (working in both ADE and open employment settings), and movement between open and ADE settings. Informal and formal 'discovery' processes that identify and document the employees' strengths, interests and supports needed are essential to identifying the right match of employment to employee. ADEs can be very effective in understanding job carving and customised employment, and this can be transferred into open employment settings. Putting in place the relevant funding (e.g. NDIS), services and supports is a critical element of the employment pathway.

Key activities that support employment capacity building are:

- Creating pathways to outside work experience (e.g. trials, job shadowing) and jobs
- Drawing on individual's networks to link to potential employers
- Drawing on established relationships between ADE and commercial partners to identify work opportunities
- Supporting careful planning of employment pathway
- Customising and carving employment opportunities (and using these skills to support open employers to identify employment opportunities).

One example of a focus on employment pathways was provided by genU:

The model reflects the genU organisational structure at moments in time when Business Enterprises [ADE] and Employment Pathways are working more closely together to generate formal pathways to Hybrid and Open Employment for Business Enterprises clients. This involves supporting pathways into and out of Business Enterprises. The aim is for formal pathways to begin in Business Enterprises guided by a structure, policy and process around the individual Supported Employee. This requires a formalised relationship and processes linking Business Enterprises and Employment Pathways to document the interests and skills of the Supported Employee, their professional development, their potential for matched or carved employment outside of genU, all via a pathway that is aligned to their NDIS supports (Campbell et al., 2022, p. 11).

Overall, ADEs offer many of the elements of the WISE-Ability model. In particular, the work to establish and test the model has identified that there are opportunities to further leverage these design elements to provide meaningful employment for supported employees that connects with employment pathways and opportunities beyond the ADE.

A WISE-Ability Training Guide, and an Employer Toolkit is available to support implementation.

## CHALLENGES TO THE WISE-ABILITY MODEL AND PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

The first phase of the development of the WISE-Ability model (Campbell et al., 2021) identified six core barriers to open employment for supported employees. In the second phase of the research (currently underway), the research team has worked with three additional ADE organisations to map the WISE-Ability model against their organisational design and practice. In addition, further work has been conducted to develop case studies which capture the employment journeys of two Supported Employees to better understand the inhibiting and enabling factors. This second round of data has, to date, focused in depth on understanding the NDIS interface as a barrier to open employment transitions.

In the following section, we draw on the data from both research stages to understand the barriers to employment and how these can be addressed. Barriers largely centre around:

- NDIS funding
- Employer knowledge and provision of supports.

### NDIS FUNDING

A range of issues have been identified in relation to the inflexibility or unsuitability of NDIS funding which acts as a barrier to transitions from ADE to open employment or hybrid employment.

#### *The inflexible annual nature of NDIS planning prevents people from attempting open employment*

Presently, NDIS plans cannot be changed more than once a year. An NDIS plan review may be requested but this is usually only in exceptional circumstances and is a lengthy, resource intensive, drawn out process. Needing to plan so far in advance is a disincentive to attempting open employment since prediction is needed around when someone living with a disability will be ready and a suitable opportunity identified.

Individual needs and goals change frequently and so must individual NDIS plans. The NDIS plan review process requires greater flexibility so that individuals are able to adjust their plans more frequently to meet their changing support and employment needs. Without this flexibility individuals may have to wait before they can pursue their goals.

I got a job trial ... and was offered a place in that, but I had to sort out my NDIS funding for it, and then that was start of November last year. Of course, I would have had to have a plan review ... [but was told], "We won't do it until next year." (Supported Employee 3, in Campbell et al., 2022, p. 16).

They go back to the planner or to the LAC, and it can sit there for six months until they get a plan review. And so that's a real barrier to people being able to start and get some real meaningful employment outcomes. (genU Staff 10, in Campbell et al., 2022, p. 15).



Individuals can also be supported to undertake hybrid working arrangements, especially as they move between supported and open employment. This also requires adjustment to their plans:

This person needs to continue to work at business enterprises [ADE], but they're going to be there Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, but on Thursdays, they're going to start working with Employment Pathways [employment service] to look at that transition out. They're going to do both. They're going to keep working [in the ADE], they're going to start building on their skills to transition out [to open employment] (Helen, disability enterprise staff, interviewed October 2022).

### ***Reduced support and funding in open employment has negative outcomes for individuals***

Individuals who enter open employment may demonstrate increased capacity and upon plan review may be assessed as requiring less support in their NDIS plan. However, informants highlight that the underpinning logic for decreased funding is incorrect. Individual capacity is bolstered by supports and when this is rapidly removed individual progress is undermined.

The Case Study below shows how one Individual (Connor) worked at an ADE before transitioning to open employment. Connor was required to self-fund his own transport to a new job because his NDIS plan review was delayed. In the initial phase of open employment, this additional financial burden acts as a barrier for individuals.

#### **Case Study 1 – Connor**

Connor is 38. He started working with an ADE following an after school program which he undertook for one year. Connor commenced at the ADE in the land care department. He built up his skills for his land care role, including chemical use certificates, occupational health and safety, how to use a ride-on mower and whipper snipper, and maintenance of equipment.

Connor worked at the ADE for 18 years and received on the job training. Once the NDIS commenced, Connor identified employment goals in his NDIS plan. Connor was then transitioned into open employment. This pathway was established by the ADE via a relationship with the Employer. The Employer is keen to create an inclusive workplace by ensuring their workforce is diverse and supports people with a disability, and many of their staff have experience supporting people with disability.

Connor is now earning a full wage in a job he loves. However, his NDIS plan is holding him back:

- Connor has requested money in his NDIS plan to get taxis to work in winter (due to the wetness, early onset of darkness, and the danger with catching buses in the dark. He was previously car-pooling to work at the ADE which is no longer possible in open employment)
- He is awaiting a response from the LAC
- Connor currently pays for his own taxis from a limited wage.

He no longer has funded 'employment support' from the ADE because he is working in open employment. Connor's former ADE support worker is still providing him with unpaid/unfunded support and checks in on Connor to track his progress. The support worker has noted that Connor's verbal skills, especially on the phone, have deteriorated somewhat since beginning open employment, but there are no current supports to address this, nor anyone funded to identify ongoing needs.

Where previously, the ADE also provided some informal support coordination assistance,



Connor now does not have this support. A support coordinator would inquire into his NDIS plan delay regarding taxi funding.

Case study 1 highlights that many support activities, both directly and indirectly related to employment, were previously provided by the ADE. These supports have not been identified and funded in Connor's plan prior to taking up open employment, leaving him without adequate support.

Without a support coordinator even simple needs may not be met, such as gaining funding to cover transport costs to work. Without adequate funding Connor must self-fund his own travel to his new job even when he had not yet started receiving pay.

Not only underpinning or indirect employment supports are necessary, but it is also essential to identify sufficient supports required in employment settings to be able to increase and maintain productivity. Case study 2 explores how on-the-job employment supports were critical to both productivity and a level of supported wage for James (below).

### Case Study 2 - James

James is a young man working in open employment and has minimal funding for supports. James lives at home with his family. He currently works five days a week and is practically full-time in his combined roles at two different Bakeries. He is a quietly confident young man who has worked steadily towards gaining his independence over the past 15 years with the support of an employment-focused disability service provider. His main goal is to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship in baking to continue this employment pathway and hone his skills.

James started off in open employment in a bakery but decided to seek a role that allowed for on-the-job skill development that better supported his needs. James did a job trial in an ADE, but he was too skilled and found the work limiting. He moved on to an open employment café after this experience. James had more success there as he undertook paid work while receiving training, and this was something James 'really required; a supportive environment while developing the skills'.

- On some days, as part of James' wraparound supports, a support worker joins him in his workplace and they perform tasks together
- A mentor works with James for 2 hours once a week.

Since working with a mentor James' work capacity has developed. He was assessed under the supported wage, productivity-based system. He was initially assessed at 20% capacity in his open employment role, and a year after being provided with a mentor that had risen to 25%. More recently he has been assessed at 45% capacity. The mentor was essential for lifting James' capacity, confidence and helping him understand the expectations of what needs to be completed.

The mentor is expected to be provided for 6 months. After this time the mentor may no longer be funded. This lack of funding risks reducing supports and undermining or stalling James' progress in the role. Decreases in productivity also potentially affect the level of wage paid.

### ***The risk of being locked into open employment and locked out of Supported Employment***

It may be difficult to leave open employment once it has been commenced, even if the work conditions are poor. The option to return to a Supported Work environment is a necessary component of the transition to open employment. The barrier to hybrid work options is affected by the:

- a) 12 month NDIS planning cycle which delays movement of the individual;
- b) NDIA assessment logic: If an individual has demonstrated that they are able to work in open employment they may be assessed as requiring less support in their NDIS plan and provided with a level of funding that is not adequate to enter into/return to an ADE.

The risk here is marginalisation from *both* open employment and ADE settings. For many, the risks associated with attempting open employment work is a disincentive to try.

Increased capacity should not trigger a reduction of supports but be accompanied by a continuation of funded supports until the person is stable in the workplace. Individuals should be supported by their NDIS Plan to try open employment knowing they will be able to return to a Supported Work environment/ADE should they wish to, and that their funding will revert to levels that makes this possible. The delays inherent in annualised plan reviews or requests for review, mean that operationally there is little flexibility and support to change workplace arrangements.

Supporting hybrid arrangements may be a suitable solution for some people, or to manage longer timeframes of transition. Core funding can be used to allow individuals to work in both open and ADE employment, in a 'hybrid' employment arrangement:

we have two people at the moment completing that hybrid model. So, we're just finalising a position in a mainstream restaurant. That person will actually stay employed at [ADE] for two days a week and commence employment with the mainstream provider for two days a week. So that's quite common now within our team (Mary, disability support staff in employment service, interviewed October 2022).

However, hybrid arrangements are not supported by all NDIS planners/LACs: 'We do have challenges where an LAC will say, "No, you pick one or the other"' (Helen, disability enterprise staff, interviewed October 2022).

### ***NDIS funding shortfall in individual plans for supporting pathways into open employment***

If 'employment' is not a nominated goal in an individual NDIS plan, then funding for employment can be drawn from a flexible element of 'core' funding. However, core funding is a lower amount. The amount is not considered adequate to cover the resources and support required to establish and support a pathway into open employment.

### ***Demonstrating Capacity and using Capacity Building funding is difficult in the ADE setting***

Some ADEs in this study have reported that they do not use Capacity Building line items because the employment supports provided are not deemed as building capacity by the NDIA. The definition of Capacity Building strips ADEs of funding they might otherwise receive to bridge the support gap that individuals like Connor experience between ADE and open employment. For instance, the Capacity Building funding could be used for an ADE support worker to check-in on Connor.

Drawing from Capacity Building funding for an ADE is *theoretically* possible, but difficult in reality. As described by informants, this is because:

- As an ADE, if claiming Core for everyday supports at work, this contradicts the logic that training is also being provided.
- As an ADE if supported employees are spending their time working then funding parameters state that they are not in training or developing other skills such as relationship building skills. However, supported employees learn hands-on and develop new skills on the job, i.e. building capacity.
- The funding challenge is that the Core funding is enough to cover everyday living and work supports, but not Certified training programs (integrated into the workplace) which would require greater on-site support from trainers in the ADE. ADEs find it difficult to offer Certified training with the funding available, and unable to demonstrate that they are able to offer this.

The evidence for Capacity Building is therefore hard to establish and fund via NDIA in some ADE contexts. This is a pattern that is hard to break from. Ultimately, providing training and supports that are unfunded affects the financial sustainability of ADEs.

## **EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND PROVISION OF SUPPORTS**

A range of barriers to transitioning supported employees into open employment sit with the employer and open employment workplace.

### ***A lack of employer knowledge about and confidence in recruiting supported employees***

In general, employers express uncertainty when contemplating employment of people with significant disability:

Some employers believe they lack the required knowledge to adequately support people with a disability and, as a result, feel uncertain when recruiting workers who require support (Campbell et al., 2021, p. 16).

This is paired with significant social stigma related to work ‘capacity’ in relation to supported employees moving into open employment.

Employers were concerned about risk and liability in employing supported employees. To some extent, this was mitigated when employers had previous relationships with an employment support provider (such as genU) where these issues were addressed through the provision of information about each individual’s needs, how they can be addressed and financially supported in the workplace (i.e. by drawing on Individual NDIS support).

Employers in the study also explained that their existing workforce is not trained to deal with the provision of adaptations and supports, or in supporting particular needs such as mental health. Employers reported a lack of resources to guide them.

The biggest downfall is employers not having a toolkit ready, and that toolkit can simply mean “people to call out to”. It’s not just “a book”. It can be a phone number, ... It can be just information tools. A personalised toolkit ... to help the employer support the person in their workplace (genU Staff 3, in Campbell et al., 2021, p. 16).

### *Problems in providing adequate support to people when they move into open employment*

There is concern that supports on-the-job are far less in open employment than in supported employment. While some of this is related to problems with NDIS funding discussed above, some relates to employer knowledge of what supports are needed or how to provide them.

Do Supported Employees know when to take breaks? Do they have access to food and water? Will their needs be met and their rights upheld? Who can they speak to if they are not well or comfortable? (genU Staff 2, in Campbell et al., 2021, p. 17).

ADEs and employment support providers have a role to prepare employers with a strong knowledge of both the employment goals of individuals and also their support needs, and how these can be met within the workplace.

A level of ongoing work customisation might also be required, otherwise there is the risk that employers will not adequately tailor work. This requires work with employers to embrace work customisation, including job carving, to create/identify suitable jobs for supported employees.

To some extent these issues can be dealt with via the provision of intensive supports to employers and employees, however these are often time-limited.

Our supported employees moving into open employment and their new employer often require intensive supports, and within the workplace, particularly at the start. This is often outside of the scope of what a DES provider can assist with (genU Staff 12, in Campbell et al., 2021, p. 17).

Employers expressed their desire for ongoing on-the-job supports, in recognition of the ongoing nature of the support they need to provide to supported employees.

That would make a world of difference... a real game changer to the point ... we would definitely employ someone if they had someone that could help out, could supervise, could make sure that they were safe (Stakeholder 4, in Campbell et al., 2021, p. 20).

Ultimately, employers need to embed supports into the workplace and be supported to build an ongoing inclusive culture for supported employees:

Managers that invest in training programs, promote inclusive practices, and seek to offer meaningful support will see the most benefits from hiring Supported Employees. This will help create a culture where a worker's strengths are valued (Campbell et al., 2021, p. 17).

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR ADE REFORM**

There are substantial opportunities for ADEs to play a significant role in not only the ongoing creation/provision of highly supported employment within their own commercial enterprises, but to create and embed pathways between ADEs and open employment. ADEs already have a range of organisational features that correlate to the WISE-Ability model, or that can be enhanced, to support these outcomes.

The WISE-Ability model identifies the need for explicit organisational design in relation to pathways to open employment. It is in this area particularly that this research highlights some of the opportunities and tensions.

### **1. ADEs HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GENERATE CUSTOMISED PATHWAYS WITH EMPLOYERS IN THE OPEN LABOUR MARKET**

The WISE-Ability model highlights the importance of external relationships as a base for employment pathway development. These relationships not only offer opportunity to identify employment opportunities but to build capacity building and support relationships between the ADE and employers (if funded to undertake these roles).

Using these existing relationships, there is opportunity to use ADE expertise in customised employment and job carving, to unlock jobs and to train employers. Job opportunities might include the relocation of some work tasks into the workplaces of other businesses, where individuals are supported to perform work tasks that would usually be outsourced to ADEs back into open employment settings.

### **2. FUNDING FOR OPEN EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS NEEDS GREATER CLARITY AND ALIGNMENT**

The effect of decreased NDIS funding for individuals means inadequate supports are in place for individuals to transition to open employment. While ADEs can establish pathways to open employment for individuals they need adequate funding to support employees to transition and build capacity in open employment. In addition, ADEs need a business model and related funding to offer capacity building to employers to a level that would ensure individuals with a disability have a positive work experience in open employment and don't seek to return to the ADE setting as a result of a negative experience.

### **3. HYBRID EMPLOYMENT REQUIRES MORE ATTENTION IN FUNDING AND IN EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROVISION.**

NDIS funding plans need to evolve to better incorporate more hybrid forms of employment – simultaneously working in open employment and disability enterprises; or cycles of trial and testing in open employment and return to ADEs, followed by re-trial. Guidance is required for all parties (ADEs, LACs/planners, supported employees) about the employment supports required to link capacity building and other goals across work settings, and to provide adequate (and flexible) levels of support.

### **4. FUNDING FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN ADEs TO BETTER SUPPORT THE PATHWAY INTO EMPLOYMENT**

If ADEs are to have a role in building employment capacity (both to maximise the productivity of supported employees within ADEs), and as part of building the pathway to other forms of employment, then this role needs clearer funding mechanisms within NDIS. This needs to encompass the dual and often simultaneous activity of direct supports on-the-job, on-the-job training, and the provision of ongoing adjustments. Possibly one mechanism of funding accountability might be using a measure of increased productivity linked to supported wage assessment.

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